

## Section Two – Orientation and Preparing to Leave

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Tim Hampshire:

My name's Tim Hampshire, I'm from South Jersey. It was actually my first time out of the United States.

Narrator:

NSLI-Y program participants come from all over the United States and have different backgrounds. Some have traveled and studied foreign language before. Many others have done neither. For all students, the question of how to prepare for their overseas stay is obviously important. Tim Hampshire studied in China.

Tim Hampshire:

I had just taken instructional language classes, but I had no idea what it was going to be like to live in China. Now that I'm back from China, I'm of the opinion that you really can't take any kind of culture class in what it's actually like to live in China. It's just so drastically different from a lot of the stuff that you experience here that you have to actually go there. But I did take among my instructional courses, we had like a current events class, like a history class and what not.

Matt Petty:

I found out the 17th of February. That was when they let us know where I would be going in Russia, Gatchina, then we left the 25th of June. I was a beginner. American Councils gave all of us several resources through the internet and suggested books that we purchase. So I learned the alphabet, I learned some phrases before I went. But the program in Russia was very well organized and so we learned a lot there.

Margaret Mullins:

I had taken no Arabic before I left. I knew nothing. Absolutely nothing; had never been to the Middle East. I have absolutely no relatives from the Middle East, they're all in Dublin. I would say that most of it you just really cannot prepare for. I continue to do a lot of work helping students in the YES program and some of the NSLI students going to Egypt and there's coaching you can do in trying to prep people culturally in how it's going to be difficult, but one of the main things that I've tried to stress to students that are going over on the first time is that everyone takes it differently. You will have a completely different experience than I did or that anyone else did or that anyone else in your program will have. I think that the most important thing is to be open as much as you possibly can, to be empathetic with everyone you deal with, to be nice, and respectful to the culture.

Narrator:

In addition to preparing themselves, students going overseas often receive a range of support from family and friends about their decision.

Sarah Runkle:

I'm Sarah Runkle and I'm from New Jersey. I went to Shanghai, in China. I was really excited about it and everyone in my family was really excited about it for me. My mom was kind of a bit more hesitant. She was kind of worried about sending me half way across the world to China, somewhere that no one in my family in my family has ever been and they were really impressed by the orientation program in May, it was a weekend here. The director of my program did this really intensive informational session for the orientation. The orientation was really helpful.

Matt Thorp:

Most of them were pretty happy for me. Like basically the same typical reaction like, ah, that's great, get me something in Russia!

Margaret Mullins:

Well, I got a range of opinions. I remember my family, I have a lot of family from different parts of Georgia and Alabama and Florida and everything and they thought I was totally insane. They thought I was going to get blown up, kidnapped, attacked, join Al-Queda - which was an interesting one. I'm going on a State Department scholarship! My family was initially hesitant but they realized that if someone else was paying for it, then there wasn't really much they could say. My friends really didn't understand why I wanted to leave after my senior year of high school before I was leaving for school and I just got a wide range of opinions. Just kind of disbelief of why anyone would go to Egypt and jump into that.

Matt Petty:

If you go to Russia, you're going to turn communist and you're going to be the devil when you come back, so people gave me grief about that, you know, they always question why would you ever study Russian, it's never going to be useful and so, I didn't take it as discouraging, it could be discouraging for some people. They questioned my judgment of why I would want to go over there and do anything like that because it's so different from my life at home. But, you know, I kept my head up and I had my reasons and so I didn't let that discourage me.

(music fade out)